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April 18, 2005

By Facsimile

Coast Guard Docket USCG-2005-20380 – 14
Docket Management Facility
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street SW
Washington, DC 20590-0001

RE: Port Access Routes Study of Potential Vessel Routing Measures to Reduce Vessel Strikes of North Atlantic Right Whales: USCG-2005-20380

Background

The Coast Guard is conducting a Port Access Route Study (PARS) to analyze potential vessel routing measures and consider adjusting existing vessel routing measures in order to reduce vessel strikes of the highly endangered North American right whale. Potential vessel routing measures are being considered to protect the right whale from ship strikes in their two major aggregation areas, while minimizing adverse impacts on vessel operations. This study will focus on the northern region: first on Cape Code Bay, and then, if it can be accomplished within the timeframe required by applicable legislation, the area off Race Point at the northern end of Cape Code (Race Point) and the Great South Channel, and the southern region: Along the seacoast in the approaches to the Ports of Jacksonville and Fernandina Beach, Florida, and Brunswick, Georgia. The recommendations of the study may lead to future rulemaking actions or appropriate international agreements.

In order to assist the Coast Guard in their assessment of the issue, they have requested comments from interested parties to the following four questions:

1. What navigational hazards do vessels operating in the study areas face? Please describe.
2. Are there strains on the current vessel routing system, such as increasing traffic density? If so, please describe.
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks to modifying existing vessel routing measures, if any, or establishing new routing measures such as those described in the NMFS ANPRM? If so, please describe.
4. What impacts, both positive and negative, would changes to existing routing measures, if any, or new routing measures, such as those described in the NMFS ANPRM, have on the study area?

Comments

Northeast Gateway Energy Bridge L.L.C. (Northeast Gateway), a subsidiary of Excelerate Energy Limited Partnership (Excelerate) is proposing to construct, own and operate the Northeast Gateway Energy Bridge™ Deepwater Port Project (NEG Port or Project) to import needed liquefied natural gas (LNG) into the New England region. NEG Port will be located offshore in Massachusetts Bay, approximately 13 miles southeast of the City of Gloucester.

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Massachusetts and 14 miles to the east of the City of Boston. Massachusetts in federal waters 250 to 270 feet in depth. The Project Area is shown on Figure A (attached). NEG Port will deliver regasified LNG to onshore markets via pipeline facilities owned and operated by Algonquin Gas Transmission, LLC (Algonquin).

Northeast Gateway is pleased to provide comments to the USCG regarding the referenced subject as it pertains and impacts its proposed project located in the vicinity of the existing Boston Harbor Fairway.

1. *What navigational hazards do vessels operating in the study areas face? Please describe.*

Vessels traveling in the vicinity of the Northeast Gateway Project Area do not face any extraordinary navigational hazards but must navigate around and avoid the routine existing vessel traffic that includes fisherman, lobsterman, commercial whale-watching vessels and other trans-oceanic vessels which traverse the area on a regular basis. Because the traffic fairways in Massachusetts Bay require only voluntary adherence, it is difficult to conclude that moving the existing fairway would necessarily achieve the greatest benefits from the relocation efforts.

2. *Are there strains on the current vessel routing system, such as increasing traffic density? If so, please describe.*

Northeast Gateway has no comment on this question at this time.

3. *What are the benefits and drawbacks to modifying existing vessel routing measures, if any, or establishing new routing measures such as those described in the NMFS ANPRM? If so, please describe.*

One of the routing measures that has been proposed is to move the existing Boston Harbor Fairway approximately 4 degrees to the north. Northeast Gateway is unaware of the benefits of this measure but it would hamper the siting of any deepwater port in the Project Area. The Project Area was selected based on federal standards and extensive consultation with governmental, fishing industry representatives, and the general public. The siting of a deepwater port under the federal Deepwater Port Act requires the facility to be located in Federal waters. Avoidance of environmentally protected areas and the Massachusetts Bay disposal site were important criteria in selecting the Project Area. Also avoiding the existing Boston Harbor Fairway was a siting factor. When Northeast Gateway initially applied these criteria to the identification of a suitable site located in Massachusetts Bay, this suitable area is quickly defined as a triangle-shaped area being bound on the west by the boundary of the South Essex Sanctuary, on the east by the Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary, and on the south by the Boston Harbor Fairway. Northeast Gateway, through the various consultations mentioned above, has located its primary project location in an area approximately one nautical mile north and parallel of the Fairway. The shift in the Fairway position as proposed by NOAA personnel of approximately 4 degrees to the north, would move the proposed locations of the Northeast Gateway project into the South Essex Sanctuary and the existing U.S. Army Corps of Engineers marine dumping site.

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4. *What impacts, both positive and negative, would changes to existing routing measures, if any, or new routing measures, such as those described in the NMFS ANPRM, have on the study area?*

Aside from the answer under question number 3 above, Northeast Gateway has no further comment on this question at this time.

Because the PARS might affect the Northeast Gateway Project Area, Northeast Gateway respectfully requests that it be included in future opportunities to comment or participate in the PARS.

Respectfully yours,

Michael J. Trammel

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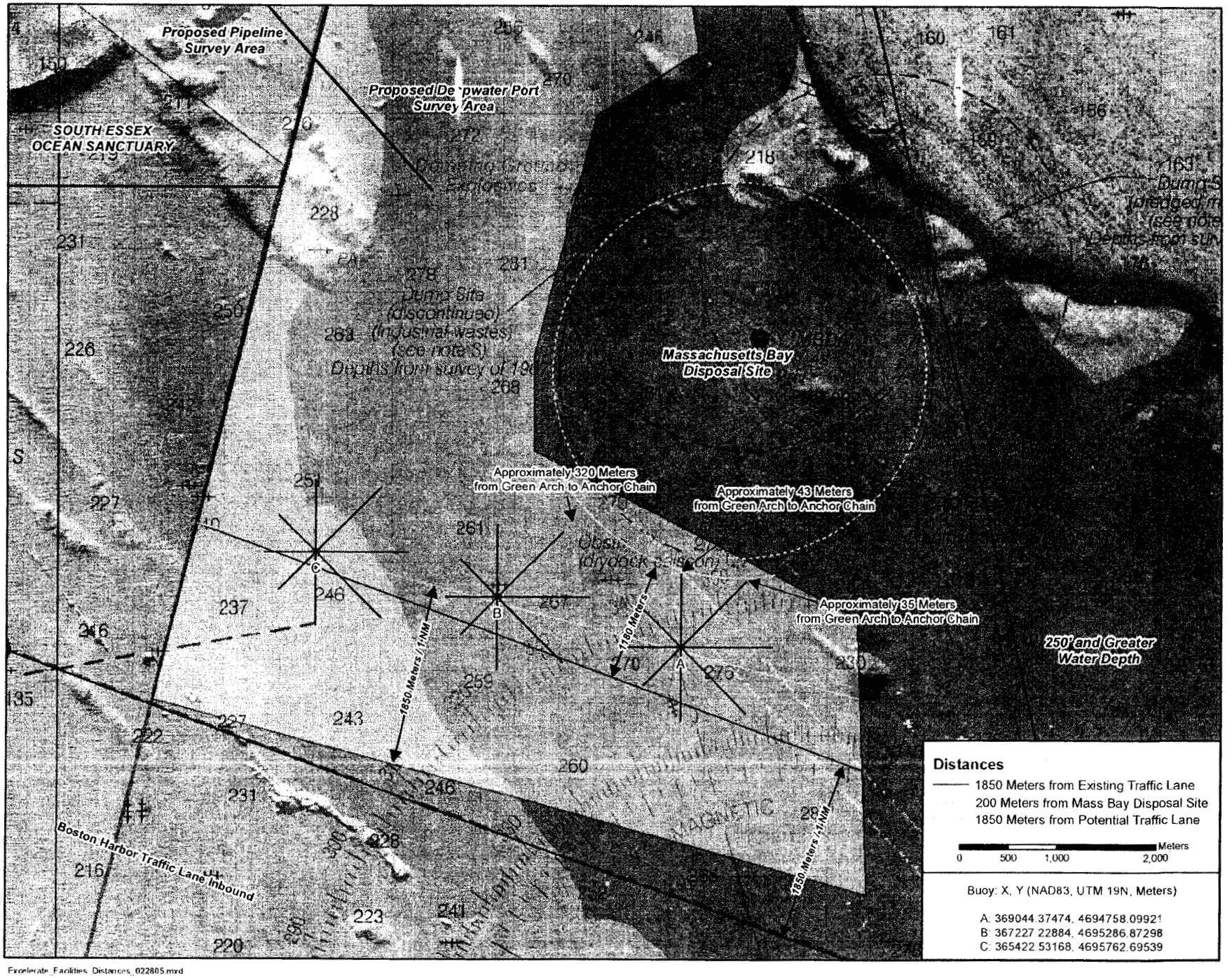
Enclosure


Proposed Pipeline Survey Area
Proposed Deepwater Port Survey Area
SOUTH ESSEX OCEAN SANCTUARY
Dumping (prohibited) Explosives
Dump Site (discontinued) (Industrial wastes) (see note 5) Depths from survey of 19
Massachusetts Bay Disposal Site
Approximately 320 Meters from Green Arch to Anchor Chain
Approximately 43 Meters from Green Arch to Anchor Chain
Approximately 35 Meters from Green Arch to Anchor Chain
1850 Meters / 1 NM
1850 Meters / 1 NM
1850 Meters / 1 NM
250' and Greater Water Depth
Boston Harbor Traffic Lane Inbound
Distances
1850 Meters from Existing Traffic Lane
200 Meters from Mass Bay Disposal Site
1850 Meters from Potential Traffic Lane
Meters
0 500 1,000 2,000
Buoy: X, Y (NAD83, UTM 19N, Meters)
A: 369044.37474, 4694758.09921
B: 367227.22884, 4695286.87298
C: 365422.53168, 4695762.69539
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